

## Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:MDRAPER:MAR

APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY PER SECTO 27229

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

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NODIS

FOR CHARGE FROM SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, LE, SA

SUBJECT: LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS

YOU SHOULD IN ABSENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTER SEEK MEETING WITH APPROPRIATE SENIOR FONMIN OFFICIAL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO SHARE THE FOLLOWING IMPRESSIONS WE HAVE GAINED OF THE CHRISTIAN POSITION IN LEBANON THROUGH THE RECENT VISITS TO CHRISTIAN-CONTROLLED TERRITORY BY FSO'S HOUGHTON AND MACK. IN SO DOING, YOU SHOULD STRESS SENSITIVITY OF THIS INFO, AND REQUEST IT BE MADE AVAILABLE ONLY TO MOST SENIOR SAUDI LEADERS.

AS REGARDS THE HOUGHTON/MACK VISIT, YOU MAY DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP IS GENERALLY CONFIDENT, AND SHOWED LITTLE CONCERN ABOUT THEIR CAPACITIES TO DEFEND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. THEIR OVERWHELMING PREOCCUPATION,

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HOWEVER, IS THE PRESENT AND FUTURE ROLE OF THE PALESTINIANS

RESIDING IN LEBANON. THE CHRISTIANS REMAIN UNWILLING TO RETURN TO THE STATUS QUO ANTE AS REGARDS THE PALESTINIAN ROLE IN THE LEBANESE STATE; THEY ARE OPPOSED TO LEAVING THE PALESTINIANS IN A POSITION TO RETAIN THE STATE-WITHIN-A-STATE STATUS OF THE PRE-WAR PERIOD OR TO PLAY A MAJOR

ROLE IN INTERNAL LEBANESE POLITICAL PROCESSES.

-- THE CHRISTIANS HAVE NOT MADE CLEAR HOW THEY INTEND TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVE. THE PHALANGE AND SARKIS SEEM TO BE THE LEADING PROPONENTS OF AN EARLY CEASEFIRE WHICH WOULD ENABLE PEACE SETTLEMENT EFFORTS TO BE CONDUCTED IN A MORE PROPITIOUS ATMOSPHERE. THE PHALANGE IN PARTICULAR TELLS US IT INTENDS TO CONTINUE EFFORTS TO PROBE THE PALESTINIANS FOR AT LEAST A LIMITED UNDERSTANDING. EVEN FOR THE PHALANGE, HOWEVER, PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM THE METN SEEMS TO BE AN IRREDUCIBLE MINIMAL CONCESSION. EVEN THE CHRISTIANS WHO WANT A CEASEFIRE NOW ARE CONCERNED THAT THE EXTREMISTS AMONG THE PALESTINIANS WILL ULTIMATELY REJECT ANY UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPED WITH THE CHRISTIANS.

-- THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS GENERALLY FAVOR A RESOLUTION OF THE LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN ASPECT OF THE CONFLICT PRIOR TO A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS. THEY APPEAR CONFIDENT THAT THE PURELY LEBANESE ASPECTS OF THE CONFLICT ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOLUTION. HERE AGAIN, SARKIS AND TO SOME EXTENT GEMAYEL ARE PREPARED TO OFFER MORE FAR-REACHING POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS OR CONCESSIONS THAN CHAMOUN AND FRANGIE.

-- THE CHRISTIANS ARE GRATEFUL FOR SYRIAN HELP. SARKIS SAID HE WAS DETERMINED TO WORK WITH THE SYRIANS FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. SARKIS EXPLICITLY ASKED THAT THE US DO EVERYTHING IT COULD TO HELP ENSURE THAT THERE WILL BE A CENTRAL AUTHORITY ON SEPTEMBER 23. WE PRESUME HE MEANT BY THIS A CEASEFIRE OR A SITUATION THAT WOULD PERMIT THE VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS TO ACCEPT HIM AS THE PIVOT AROUND WHICH THE COUNTRY COULD BE REUNITED.

-- IT IS AN ACCEPTED FACT AMONG ALL THAT SARKIS WILL TAKE  
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OVER AS PRESIDENT ON SEPTEMBER 23.

-- THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS GENERALLY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SUPPORT IN MATERIEL AND MEN BEING SUPPLIED FROM ABROAD, FROM THE SOVIETS, IRAQ, AND LIBYA.

-- SOME OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS ASKED FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT, AND WE EXPLAINED OUR POSITION THAT WE WILL CONTINUE

OUR POLICY OF NOT SUPPLYING WEAPONS TO EITHER SIDE, NOR PERMITTING COMMERCIAL SALES, BUT THAT THE US WILL BE PREPARED TO PLAY ITS PART IN HELPING EQUIP A NATIONAL FORCE AFTER THE CONFLICT IS CONCLUDED.

-- OUR ENVOYS MADE CLEAR THAT WE CONTINUED TO SUPPORT A SOLUTION THAT WOULD PRESERVE THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, INDEPENDENCE, NATIONAL UNITY AND COHESION OF LEBANON. WE SAID THAT WE WERE PREPARED TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO SEEK A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE JANUARY-FEBRUARY PRINCIPLES. WE SAID WE HAD CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED SYRIAN EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT A POLITICAL SOLUTION, AND WE WOULD BE WILLING TO BACK MOVES IN LEBANON TO BRING THE FIGHTING TO AN END AND NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT.

-- WE TOLD THE CHRISTIANS THAT WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO SEND BACK FROM TIME TO TIME REPRESENTATIVES TO TALK TO THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS SECURITY CONDITIONS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR OUR EMBASSY IN WEST BEIRUT TO RE-ESTABLISH NORMAL CONTACTS. WE TOLD SARKIS THAT WE WOULD BE PLEASED TO RECEIVE IN WASHINGTON A PERSONAL ENVOY FROM HIM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER HIS INAUGURATION.

AFTER GOING OVER THE FOREGOING POINTS, YOU SHOULD SAY THAT WE WOULD WELCOME SAG'S ASSESSMENT OF THE EVOLVING SITUATION. YOU SHOULD STATE WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT SARKIS, HAVING BEEN ELECTED WITH THE SUPPORT OF BOTH MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN LEBANESE, WILL BE ABLE TO ACT AS A FORCE FOR UNITY AND POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION AFTER HIS INAUGURATION AS PRESIDENT. ROBINSON

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic DecapTIONing:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** INSTRUCTIONS, CHRISTIANS, PALESTINIANS, CONCILIATION, ARMISTICE, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, BRIEFING MATERIALS, POLITICAL LEADERS, POLITICAL SITUATION, CAT-C  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 21 SEP 1976  
**DecapTION Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**DecapTION Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** greeneet  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976STATE234219  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** MDRAPER:MAR  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** P840095-1473, N760007-0160  
**From:** STATE  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760935/aaaabeco.tel  
**Line Count:** 145  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ORIGIN NODS  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** NODIS  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** NODIS  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** greeneet  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 22 JUN 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <22 JUN 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <22 OCT 2004 by greeneet>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PINT, SA, LE, US  
**To:** JIDDA  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006